

## **BOAT SHOW LOOKS BACK 45 YEARS!**

It premiered in 1973 when there were hardly any in-water boat shows anywhere in the country.

It was first staged in Cedar Point's north guest marina basin with fewer than 80 boats in-the-water and one small tent holding a dozen accessory displays.

But it was an instant hit with boaters and dealers, and it rapidly grew to be the largest in-water show on the Great Lakes.

So when this year's Progressive Insurance North America Demo Boat Show opens for 4 days, August 24-27, it will mark its 45th Anniversary, one of the longest running in-water shows in the nation, and still be the largest show of its kind with more than 350 boats on display.

Looking back, in the early years, show goers were shuttled on trams from the main Cedar Point parking lots up to the north marina. When the show eventually outgrew that marina in the 1980's, it was moved to its current location in Cedar Point's south harbor where space is not limited and visitors can conveniently park adjacent to the show's entrance.

In an interview with Bryan Ralston, president of the Lake Erie Marine Trades Association, he shared background facts and to give us a feeling for the boat show's rich history.

"A former president of LEMTA, Norm Schultz, actually created the show in 1973," said Ralston, "and he led it for 34 years until retiring. He told us he started the show with the idea that it would be a quick weekend end-of-season clearance boat sale for LEMTA member dealers.

"He hoped maybe 2,000 boaters might come," Ralston continued, "but when more than 5,000 literally overran the marina, he suddenly realized he had a big boat show on his hands and the boaters really liked the in-water show format."

From less than 80 boats the first year, the show quickly filled all 200-plus docks available and all adjacent land space in what was the Cedar Point Guest Docks area of the North marina. To grow the show even more, Schultz began having temporary floating docks built to supplement the marina's existing docks.

For years the show packed boats and displays into the North basin until, ultimately, a decision was made to move the event to Cedar Point's South Harbor which, at that time, didn't have any docks or infrastructure.

Putting the show where it is today, in the South Harbor, was a big challenge but it allowed the event to triple the on-land accessory tents and displays, and grow the in-water dockage to whatever amount the dealers wanted. To do it thousands of feet of temporary floating dock had to be built because there were no permanent slips in the south harbor at that time.

Even though there are some permanent docks in the harbor now, the show is still primarily held on the temporary floating docks. Moreover, when the show was moved there, heavy permanent electrical power, transformers, and a distribution system to power-up the entire event had to be constructed and installed on the site because none existed there.

It all proved to be a great move for the show and more convenient for the boaters who could now conveniently park adjacent to the show (no more riding trams). And, it's clear boaters have always been excited about this show and its venue. To date, more than a half million from a 4-state area and Ontario have attended to the event, and another 12,000 or so are expected to walk the docks at this year's event. For the latest show information, go to: [www.cedarpointboatshow.com](http://www.cedarpointboatshow.com)